WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

A method for securely providing customer information to an Internet merchant, the method comprising:

(A) obtaining customer information from a customer;

(B) storing the customer information;

(C) receiving a request that the customer information be provided to the merchant;

(D) authenticating the customer in response to the request; and

(F) providing the customer information to the merchant.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising

(G) obtaining authentication information from the customer in conjunction with the customer information.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein (D) comprises:

(D-1) receiving authentication information submitted by an individual in response to a request on a web site of the merchant; and

(D-2) confirming that the authentication information submitted by the individual matches the authentication information obtained from the customer.

4.   The method of claim 3, wherein the customer information and the authentication information obtained from the customer are obtained through a web site.

5.   The method of claim 4, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a user ID and a password.

6.   The method of claim 4, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a passcode.

7.   The method of claim 2, wherein (D) comprises:

(D-1) receiving, from the merchant, authentication information obtained from an individual; and

(D-2) confirming that the authentication information received from the merchant matches the authentication information obtained from the customer.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the authentication information obtained from the individual is obtained by the merchant through a merchant web site.

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9.   The method of claim 8, wherein the customer information and the authentication information obtained from the customer are obtained through a web site.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a user ID and a password.

11.   The method of claim 9, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a passcode.

12.   The method of claim 2, wherein (D) comprises:

(D-1) requesting that an individual submit authentication information; and

(D-2) confirming that the authentication information submitted by the individual matches the authentication information obtained from the customer.

13.   The method of claim 12, wherein the customer information and the authentication information obtained from the customer are obtained through a web site.

14.   The method of claim 13, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a user ID and a password.

15.   The method of claim 13, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a passcode.

16.   The method of claim 2, further comprising:

(H) placing a cookie on the customer's computer.

17.   The method of claim 16, wherein (D) consists of

(D-1) receiving the cookie.

18.   The method of claim 16, wherein (D) comprises

(D-1) receiving the cookie.

19.   The method of claim 18, wherein (D) further comprises:

(D-2) receiving authentication information from an individual; and

(D-3) confirming that the authentication information received matches the authentication information obtained from the customer.

20.   The method of claim 19, wherein (F) comprises:

(F-1) encrypting the customer information; and

(F-2) transmitting the encrypted customer information to the merchant.

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21.   The method of claim 19, wherein the customer information and the authentication information obtained from the customer are obtained through a web site.

22.   The method of claim 21, wherein the customer authentication information comprises a password.

5   23.   The method of claim 2, further comprising:

(H) receiving, from the merchant, purchase information regarding purchases made by the customer; and

(I) using the purchase information to augment a customer profile that represents the customer's interests.

10   24.   The method of claim 23, further comprising

(J) providing the customer profile to Internet merchants.

25.   A method for securely providing customer information to Internet merchants, the method comprising:

receiving a request that customer information of a registered customer be

15   provided to a merchant;

providing at least one form, wherein the at least one form solicits the entry of authentication information from a purchasing customer;

receiving authentication information submitted by the purchasing customer;

20   verifying that the authentication information submitted by the purchasing customer matches the authentication information of a registered customer; and

providing the customer information of the registered customer to the merchant.

26.   The method of claim 25, further comprising registering a customer by

25   obtaining customer information and authentication information from the customer

27.   A system for securely providing customer information to Internet merchants, the system comprising:

a first set of web pages configured to obtain customer information and authentication information from a customer;

30   a database configured to associate and store the customer information and authentication information obtained from the customer;

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computer code that authenticates the customer in response to a request to provide the customer information to a merchant; and

computer code that provides the customer information to the merchant upon authentication of the customer.

28.   The system of claim 27, further comprising

a second set of web pages configured to obtain authentication information from an individual, wherein the computer code that authenticates the customer processes the authentication information provided by the individual.

29.   A method for securely obtaining customer information from an information service, the method comprising:

requesting that a customer submit authentication information;

providing the submitted authentication information to the information service in conjunction with a request for customer information; and

receiving customer information from the information service in response to the request.

30.   A method through which an Internet merchant can securely obtain customer information from an information service, the method comprising:

providing a checkout web page to a customer, the checkout web page having a link to an information service web page, the link including URL encoded information regarding the identity of the merchant; and

receiving customer information from the information service.

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